RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, the 13th March, 1986|22 Phalgun, 1907 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, **Mr. Chairman** in the Chair

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Lambidhar Project

*261. SHRI KAPIL VERMA†
DR. LOKESH CHANDRA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Lambidhar Project in the Doon Valley has been shelved; and

(b) what measures Government have adopted to close down all limestone and marble mines in the area to maintain its ecology?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI) (a) No, Sir.

(b) The limestone mining operations in Doon Valley are now governed by the Orders of the Supreme Court in March 1985 which stated that only six mines, including the Lambidhar, be allowed to operate subject to the observance of the requirements of Mines Act, 1952, Mining and Minerals Rules, 1961 and other related statutes, rules and regulations.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: There have been persistent complaints in the Press recently that the Lambidhar project has seriously affected the water resources of Mussoorie, resulting in water, soil erosion and cutting of trees in the Lambidhar forest creating an ecological imbalance. Has the Department of Environment looked into these complaints made much after the Supreme Court judgment? The Supreme Court appointed as many as three committees to look into the mines in Doon Valley and the Gvernment of India appointed group. In which specific category has the Bhargava Committee and other committees put the Lambidhar mine? I also wan to know whether the Government appointed a committee to make sure that the Acts referred to by the hon. Minister are being actually followed. And what are the contents of the Bandopadhyaya Committee Report submitted to the Supreme Court?

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI Sir, as far as the Working Group which has been appointed its concerned, they have classified these mines into two categories, and another technical committee appinted by the Supreme Court classified these mines into three categories: A. B. and C. Sir, 'C' category are those mines which are required to be closed down permanently, and 'B' and 'C' categories are some of those which can be allowed, with the observance of those rules and regulations. Sir, after this report has been submitted by the technical committees, the Supreme Court ordered that six mines, out of which this mining area, Lambidhar, is one, should be allowed to work, and they should continue to work and 23 should be closed dwn permanently. And 23 have been put for a further scrutiny by the Bandopadhyaya Committee. Now, Sir, the Bandopadhyaya Committee has to submit its report to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court has to take a decision after considering the Bandopadhyaya Committee report. Sir, now the matter is with the Supreme Court and we do not know as yet the recomendations of the Bandopadhyaya Committee report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second supplementary.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Sir, I had asked the hon. Minister whether he would make sure that the Lambidhar project is actually implementing the provisions of the two Acts, in my first supplemenary. I hope while replying to the second supplementary he will touch on that question.

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†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri kapil verma.

My second supplementary is that the Minister had assured Parliament that a comprehensive Act would be brought forward, and besides harsh measures would be taken in the existing Act to protect the environment. When is that happening? Secondly, as far as I remember the Prime Minister had very kindly agreed, replying to a question of Shimati Krishna Kaul, to consider the suggestion for placing 'environment' in the Concurrent List. I would like to know whether he has had some time to give some thouhgt to this question.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: As far as this process of monitoring the mines which are under operation is concerned, it is a permanent process. We have given instructions that the rules and regulations should be observed strictly. I may just inform the hon. Member that the U.P. Government to which this Lambidhar mining belongs, I am told, have closed down certain operations of the Lambidhar mining which falls within the Municipal limits of Mussoorie and in certain other areas where they are operating. As far as this comprehensive Bill to control environment is concerned, I hope that the Bill will soon before this hon. House.

DR. LOKESH CHANDRA: Will the hon. Minister kindly state as to how many crores of rupess have been invested in this non-plan Lambidhar Project since its inception in 1974 and what is the loss or gain incurred? Secodly, I would like to know whether the water resources of Mussooric have been affected by the indiscriminate mining of Lambidhar and whether this uneconomic project in the non-plan sector will be closed in view of grave ecological consequences to the Doon Valey in general and to the own of Musscorie in particular .

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI As far as economics of Lambidhar project is concerned, it is not the concerned of this Department. The U.P. State Government can better look after it as to whether it is an economic proposition or whether it is an uneconomic proposition. As far as the water resources are concerned, I cannot say in particular about this Lambidhar project, but the mining has certain by affected the water resources in Doon Valley in general.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There was another question whether ecology will be given higher priority.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: Sir, we are giving high priority to ecological aspect.

SHR P. N. SUKUL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the question of preserving Mussoorie town and the ecology around it has been receiving our attention for quite some time. In fact, the Petitions Commitee has already submited one of its reports on the subject to the Government. Is the Government considering to preserve Mussoorie town and ecology around it by stopping indiscriminate quarrying of limestone and minerals? Is Government considering some proposals to bring an amendment to the present law to terminate the on-going contracts for quarrying? That is the main problem.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: That has already been done by the order of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has given orders that certain qarries should be closed down even if their term of contract has not expired. We are certainly very much concerned about the ecology of Mussoorie and the whole of Doon Valley. We are taking steps to improve the ecology of that beautiful area.

श्री रामचन्द्र विकल : सभापति जी, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहूंगा कि वे खाने चलाने वाले कौन हैं और सुप्रीम-कोर्ट को रिपोर्ट देने में देरी क्यों है ? तीसरा जो आपने कहा कि उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार जिम्मेदार है, तो उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार को कोई सुझाव केन्द्रीय सरकार भेजेगी, इस तरह का, जो उनकी धारणा है ?

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: Sir, we shall certainly send our instructions if we find that they are working against the rules and regulations. For us the environment and ecology are much more important than any quarrying and economic activities.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Doon Valley is a vulnerable ecological area to which

Shrimati Indira Gandhi attached great importance and even conducted an aerial survey to see the damage done by man to nature in this area. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it is also under the consideration of the Government to declare this area as a no-polluting industry area whereby no licence would be given to an inductry which would be polluting in nature.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: Sir, the Government of India, the Department of Environment has set up a special Doon Valley Board to take care of the ecology of that particular area and their sittings are there to take into account the industries which are coming up there and which are creating a pollution problem and an ecological problem. And we are very much concernmed about the ecology of that area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 262 —Shri Natha Singh.

*262 **[The questioner (Shri Natha Singh) was absent. For answer, vide Cols. infra]**..

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 263.

Report of the Sen Committe on reorganisation of foreign office.

*263. SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI: Will the minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the S. Sen Committeee on reorganisation of foreign office had submitted its report to Government in the year 1984;

(b) if so, what are the main finding of the Committee; and

(c) what decision has been taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Several recommendations have been made covering recruitment, training, staffing, promotion, inspection, use of office machines, language specialisations, publicity, property, entertainment, etc. These recommendations are under consideration.

SHRI BHUVANESH CHATURVEDI: Sir, has the Sen Committee in any way highlighted the importance of shifting our attention to economic matters from purely political matters especially with those countries with whom we have no strategic problems? Secondly . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: You will have a second supplementary. Please sit down.

SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN: Yes, Sir, the Sen Committee has emphasised the importance of concentrating on economic questions in our relations with foreign countries. This is, as a matter of fact, a shift which has taken place in the functioning if the Foreign Service quite some time ago. And special instructions have been given to Heads of Missions to concentrate greater attention on improving and developing economic relations with countries abroad, expanding our export trade and other economic aspects of India's interest.

SHRI BHUVANESH CHATURVEDI: Has it in any way affected our appointments of Ambassadors to these countries? And I would also like to know whether the Committee has made any suggestions for external publicity which by all accounts wants a greater reshaping.

SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN: Yes, Sir, we do give importance in the selection of Ambassadors especially where economic work is important. For example, in our selection of Ambassador to Belgium and EEC we invariably select an economic expert. In the same way, not only that, an average Foreign Service Officer is expected to develop understanding and expertise in economic matters. In some of the major countries where economic questions are particularly crucial, we do give importance to theose who have some experience and understanding of the economic questions.